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Trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests

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Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present note covers the contributions to and expenditures of the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests for the year 2017. The generous contributions of donor countries to the Fund are gratefully acknowledged. Without them, implementation of many of the mandated activities would not have been possible.

The present note was prepared pursuant to the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2017–2020.

* E/CN.18/2018/1.

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I. Introduction

1. In Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33 on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015, Member States urged donor Governments and organizations, including financial institutions, and others in a position to do so, to provide voluntary contributions to the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests. In order to ensure transparency, the Forum secretariat reports to the Forum at each session on the operation of the Fund, including on the amounts contributed, the source of the contributions and a description of how the funds have been expended. It should be noted that the present note is submitted for information. The figures contained herein have not been audited and represent, as such, an estimate as at 31 December 2017.

2. The present note outlines the contributions to and activities funded by the trust fund for the year 2017. Activities were carried out pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 71/285, on the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, and 62/98, on the United Nations forest instrument, and resolutions of the Forum, including Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33.

II. Contributions to the trust fund

3. In 2017, five donor countries generously contributed to the trust fund in support of the Forum's mandates, sessions and intersessional activities, as well as the work of the Forum secretariat (see table 1). The total contributions to the fund were approximately $1.17 million, inclusive of programme support costs. Implementation of core activities of the Forum would not have been possible without these contributions, which are gratefully acknowledged.

Table 1
Contributions to the trust fund, 2017
(United States dollars)

Contributor	*Total*
China[a]	340 974
Japan[b]	66 456
Republic of Korea	19 890
Russian Federation	346 510
United States of America	400 000
Total contributions	**1 173 830**
Opening balance, 1 January 2017	1 923 456
Grand total	**3 097 286**

Note: The figures contained herein have not been audited and represent, as such, an estimate as at 31 December 2017.

[a] The amount contributed was for activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network. The donor has also provided an in-kind contribution of a Junior Programme Officer post.

[b] The amount contributed was for activities on the international arrangement on forests and on monitoring, assessment and reporting to the Forum. The donor has also provided an in-kind contribution of a Junior Programme Officer post.

III. Expenditures of the trust fund, 2017

4. The travel of representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition accounted for 47 per cent of total expenditures during 2017. Staffing of the Secretariat funded from extrabudgetary resources accounted for 39 per cent of total expenditures in 2017. Further information on the expenditures of the trust fund is presented in table 2 and the figure.

Table 2
Expenditures of the trust fund, 2017

(United States dollars)

Expenditure	*Total*
Staffing costs[a]	346 526
Travel of representatives and experts	422 146
Travel of staff	104 627
Contractual services[b]	9 000
Operating expenses[c]	8 840
Subtotal	**891 139**
13 per cent programme support costs	115 848
Total	**1 006 987**

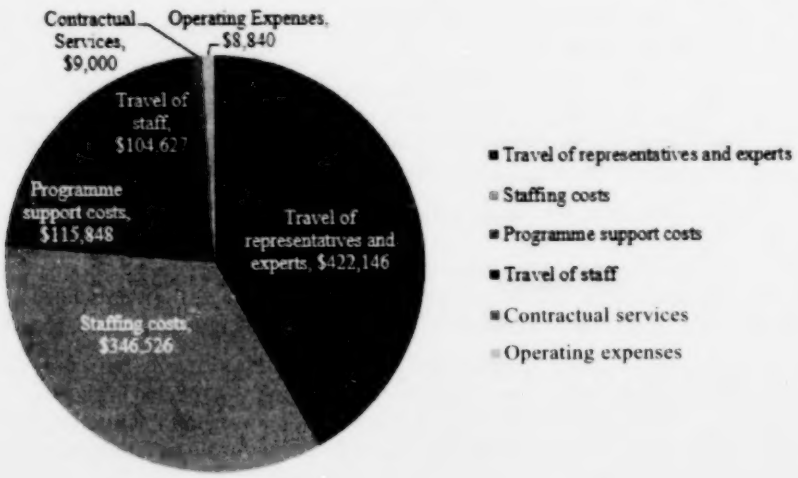
Note: The figures contained herein have not been audited and represent, as such, an estimate as at 31 December 2017.

[a] Includes staff posts funded from extrabudgetary resources, rental of office space, information technology equipment and other staff-related expenses.

[b] Includes individual contractors' fees.

[c] Includes conference servicing costs, United Nations Development Programme service fees and bank charges.

Expenditures of the trust fund, 2017



5. During 2017, extrabudgetary funds were used to supplement funds from the regular budget (Programme 7, Economic and Social Affairs, subprogramme 8, sustainable forest management). These contributions were crucial for funding a significant part of the activities of the programme of work of the Forum secretariat in 2017, including the following:

(a) **Staffing of the secretariat**. In order to implement mandated activities, the posts of two staff members in the Professional and General Service categories were funded from extrabudgetary resources using primarily unearmarked resources of the trust fund. During 2017, one post at the P-3 level and one General Service post were funded from extrabudgetary resources. In 2018, it is expected that one post at the P-3 level and one General Service post will continue to be funded from extrabudgetary resources;

(b) **Travel of representatives and experts**. Travel assistance was provided to facilitate the participation of representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to Forum-related meetings in 2017. Those meetings included meetings of the working group, from 16 to 19 January 2017, and the special session of the Forum, on 20 January, all of which were held at United Nations Headquarters, the twelfth session of Forum, held at Headquarters on 25 April 2016 and from 1 to 5 May 2017, and intersessional meetings;

(c) **Travel of staff**. Fund resources were used to supplement regular budget funds to cover the travel costs of Forum secretariat staff members participating in key international forest-related events, including meetings related to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, monitoring, assessment and reporting, regional coordination, and meetings related to strengthening engagement with major groups and to the field of forest communications;

(d) **Contractual services, conference servicing and operating expenses**. During 2017, extrabudgetary funds were used to cover costs relating to individual contractors, conference servicing, United Nations Development Programme service fees and bank charges related to expert group meetings held away from Headquarters.

IV. Achievements and results

6. The following achievements and results are attributable to contributions made to the trust fund:

(a) The adoption by the General Assembly, in its resolution 71/285 of 27 April 2017, of the United Nations strategic plan for forests for 2017–2030, and the adoption by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2017/4 of 20 April 2017, of the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for 2017–2020;

(b) The successful convening of the twelfth session of the Forum, which was the first technical session, as part of the new restructured format, and focused on technical issues related to sustainable forest management, strategies to promote implementation of the strategic plan and thematic priorities related to the annual theme and reviews of the 2017 high-level political forum on sustainable development;

(c) Fund resources were used to supplement funds from the regular budget, the United Nations Development Account and the regular programme of technical cooperation for activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, which is building capacity to mobilize forest financing for sustainable forest management in pilot countries;

(d) Activities related to monitoring, assessment and reporting, including ongoing work related to the development of global forest indicators and the development of a new format and cycle for voluntary national reporting to the Forum, were carried out using resources from the trust fund;

(e) Observance of the International Day of Forests in 2017 through activities including special events at Headquarters and social media campaigns, which were carried out using resources from the trust fund;

(f) Resources from the trust fund were also used to support the travel of Bureau members and representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to meetings of the Forum, including the twelfth session of the Forum;

(g) The trust fund continues to be a critical source of funding for supplementing the staffing needs of the Forum secretariat, which is the smallest division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The fund currently covers the salaries of two staff members (in the Professional and General Service categories) of the secretariat, funded from extrabudgetary resources.

V. In-kind contributions

7. The Forum secretariat would like to express its gratitude to the Governments of China and Japan for funding Junior Programme Officer posts in 2017. Both staff members have played an important role in supporting the planning and organization of Forum-related meetings and, in particular, in activities relating to capacity development activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and on monitoring, assessment and reporting to the Forum.

VI. Priorities and challenges

8. Since the Forum was established, its mandates and outputs have steadily grown. The human and budgetary resources needed by the secretariat in order to support the Forum and its member States have been highlighted and well recognized in resolutions, including Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33.

9. Since its inception in May 2015, the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, in its pilot implementation phase, has contributed to the design of national forest financing strategies and assisted 13 countries in mobilizing, accessing and enhancing the effective use of existing financial resources. A key challenge for the Forum secretariat is to raise adequate resources in order to be able to scale up the activities of the Network.

10. The level of dedicated contributions to fund the travel of representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to Forum-related meetings has declined in recent years. This poses a challenge for the Forum secretariat in its efforts to facilitate balanced representation of both developed and developing countries at Forum meetings.

11. Sustained and adequate human and financial resources will be critical to enabling the secretariat to support the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests and the achievement of the six global forest goals and 26 associated targets. Meeting the level of ambition and carrying out the vision of the strategic plan will require the scaling up of ongoing activities related to capacity development,

mobilizing forest financing, monitoring, assessment and reporting on progress in implementation, promoting regional coordination, communication and outreach and strengthening stakeholder engagement, including with the private sector. It is thus recommended that sustainable and consistent extrabudgetary funds continue to be provided so as to provide the secretariat with a stable basis for the performance of its functions.

Table 3
Estimated expenditures from the trust fund, 2018

(United States dollars)

Expenditure	*2018*
Staffing costs[a]	316 000
Consultants and experts[b]	225 000
Travel of representatives and experts[c]	335 000
Travel of staff	100 000
Contractual services	80 000
Subtotal	**1 056 000**
13 per cent programme support costs	137 280
Total	**1 193 280**
Closing balance, 31 December 2017	2 306 660
Expected contributions, 2018	1 000 000
Total expected funds, 2018	**3 306 660**

Note: The figures contained herein have not been audited and represent, as such, an estimate as at 31 December 2017. Estimated expenditures refer to funds required to implement the current programme of work of the Forum secretariat; they do not include funding for any additional activities that may be decided upon at the thirteenth session of the Forum.

[a] Estimate based on the cost of funding two posts from extrabudgetary resources in 2018.

[b] Includes costs of engaging consultants to support Forum-related meetings and the work of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network.

[c] Includes travel costs of representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to the thirteenth session of the Forum, in 2018.